Creative HubKit

Made by hubs for emerging hubs.

A foreword from the British Council

Around the world a dynamic network of enterprising people are convening in creative spaces to test new ideas, ventures and kickstart the global economy. These new communities form hubs which allow unlikely allies to connect and find support and investment. The hubs may take many forms, from makerspaces to labs to clusters, but share a commitment to contributing to a better future.

— Hubs tend to attract people from a range of backgrounds with a focus on developing digital technology, enterprise and social innovation. They facilitate collaboration in physical and digital space.

— Hubs are inspired by new forms of leadership – their leaders or 'convenors' understand how to create social, economic and cultural value and move happily between these different worlds

— Hubs operate through new and hybrid business models, often with an 'open' ethos and strong shared vision, whether they are small collectives, co-operatives, online platforms or large physical structures

— Hubs create new kinds of social innovation – supporting new ventures, global collaborations and growth, and new kinds of relationships between creative practice, business and audiences.

Over the last 10 years the number and profile of hubs has grown rapidly because of changes in technology, economics and audiences. Hubs are beginning to be recognised for their economic and social value but there is still much to be done to fully understand and support their potential, perhaps because they work differently to the major organisations of the 20th century.

"A major act of leadership right now, call it a radical act, is to create the places and processes so people can actually learn together, using our experiences." Margaret Wheatley

The British Council has been working with hubs for the past three years, setting up an informal global network of creative hub conveners and their communities. Our projects, like Maker Library (South Africa, Nigeria, Mexico & Turkey), Playable City (Brazil, Nigeria & Japan), 3x3 Hubs Exchange (Brazil & the UK), Culture Shift hacks (Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Russia & Brazil) and Nesta Enterprise toolkits have sought to offer international opportunities, inspiration and practical skills. This is part of our commitment to developing the boundaries of creative practice and cultural professionals.

In January 2015, the British Council partnered with ADDICT Creative Industries Portugal and Lisbon City Council. With the support of the European Creative Business Network and Creative England, we brought together over 200 hubs from 22 countries in Lisbon for our first European Creative Hubs Forum, to share insights, tools and resources that support the resilience and growth of hubs.

The role of a hub manager or 'convenor' is key to developing the success of their community. Hubs are often developing fast without any real structural planning or industrial policy, grown out of local needs and entrepreneurial energy.

This HubKit aims to illustrate some of the experiences and approaches from those building successful and sustainable hubs. Hubs cannot simply be a response to a space opportunity but need their community at the forefront. The HubKit explains why engaging with your community of users from the start can lead to a much more holistic and sustainable model.

Whether you are considering setting up
a new creative hub, are a hub manager who
is looking for an alternative business model,
or are a funder who is exploring the different
financial structures of hubs; the HubKit will
give you insights into how creative hubs are
formed, structured and sustained.

Our definition of a creative hub:

A creative hub is a place, either physical or virtual, which brings creative people together. It is a convenor, providing space and support for networking, business development and community engagement within the creative, cultural and tech sectors.

Creative hubs have a variety of purposes:

- To provide support by way of services and/or facilities to the ideas, projects, organisations and businesses it hosts, whether on a long-term or short-term basis, including events, skills training, capacity building and global opportunities.

- To facilitate collaboration and networking among its community.

- To reach out to research and development centres, institutions, creative and non-creative industries.

- To communicate and engage with a wider audience, developing an active communication strategy.

- To champion and celebrate emerging talents; exploring the boundaries of contemporary practice and taking risks towards innovation.

Well-designed creative hubs can achieve and exceed these objectives, providing they have solid foundations in place. This is where the HubKit comes in, it will give you practical advice and tools to build your creative hub with a strong community at its heart. Hubs act as a central connection for a network of people and come in all shapes and sizes. As business models and political/financial systems vary considerably around the world, there is no one magic formula for developing a hub. However hubs do share many principles, practices and an overarching common objective: to connect and develop opportunities for a community of creatives.

Creative Hub Models

Creative hubs come in all different shapes and sizes, and can be described in many different ways – collectives, co-operatives, labs, incubators and can be static, mobile or online. Here are a few of their most common features.
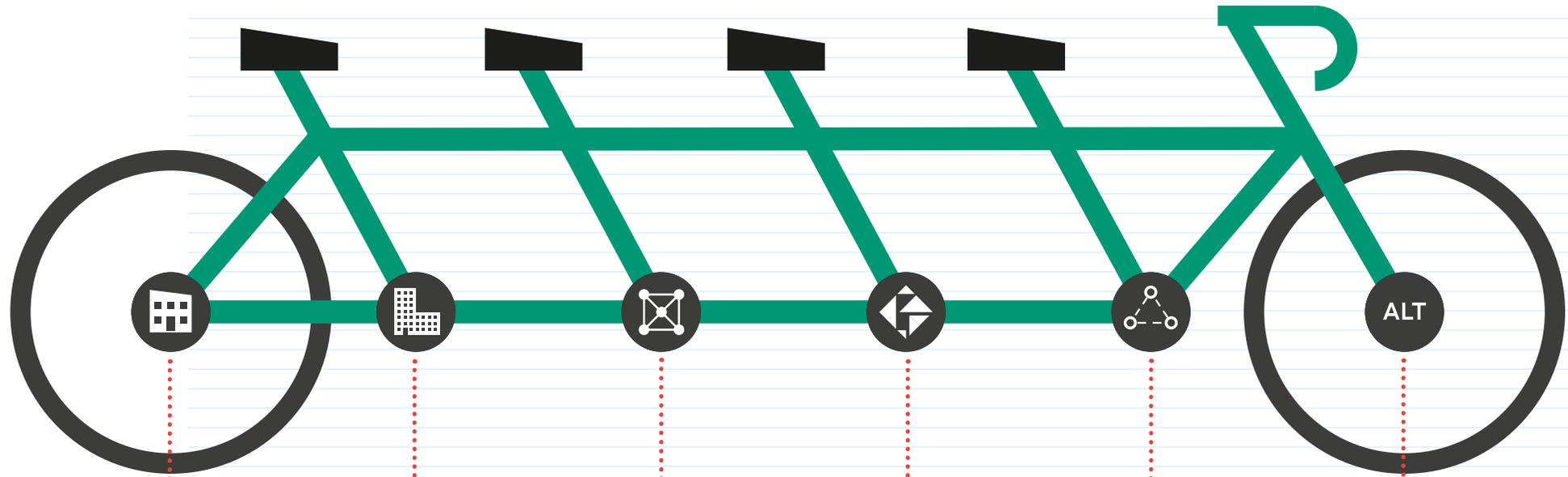
STUDIO
Small collective of individuals and/or small businesses, in a co-working space.

CENTRE
Large scale building which may have other assets such as a cafe, bar, cinema, maker space, shop, exhibition space.

NETWORK
Dispersed group of individuals and/or businesses – tends to be sector or place specific.

CLUSTER
Co-located creatives individuals and businesses in a geographic area.

ONLINE PLATFORM
Uses only online methods – website, social media to engage with a dispersed audience.

ALTERNATIVE
Focused on experimentation with new communities, sectors and financial models.

Hubs are defined and shaped by their unique features:

STRUCTURE

FOR PROFIT / PRIVATE
NON-PROFIT / SOCIAL VENTURE / CHARITABLE

SECTOR

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY – I.E. MIX OF CREATIVE, CULTURAL, TECHNOLOGY, SOCIAL ENTERPRISE
SECTOR SPECIFIC – I.E. GAMES HUB, DESIGN HUB, TECH HUB

HUB OFFERS

HOTDESKING
STUDIO SPACE
TRAINING, WORKSHOPS, EVENTS
MOBILE WORKING
ACCESS TO EQUIPMENT, SKILLS, RESOURCES, NETWORKS
INCUBATION, BUSINESS SUPPORT, MENTORING, FINANCING
RETAIL OPPORTUNITIES
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Hubs play a huge role in developing our creative economy and use their physical and/or virtual space for networking and organisational development to support individuals, organisations, businesses and projects on a short or long term basis to:

- Facilitate collaboration, networking and skills development.

- Reach out and collaborate with research and development centres, institutions, creative and non creative industries.

- Communicate and engage with a wider audience and build global digital opportunities.

- Champion and celebrate emerging talent.

- Push boundaries by taking risks towards innovation.

Hubs are much more than a physical building; strong leadership is central to sustaining any kind of successful creative hub. You will find Insider Insights from hub managers who have established creative hubs throughout the HubKit; these offer background details about the hub, practical advice learned from experience and guidance tips for those considering developing a hub.

CONTENTS
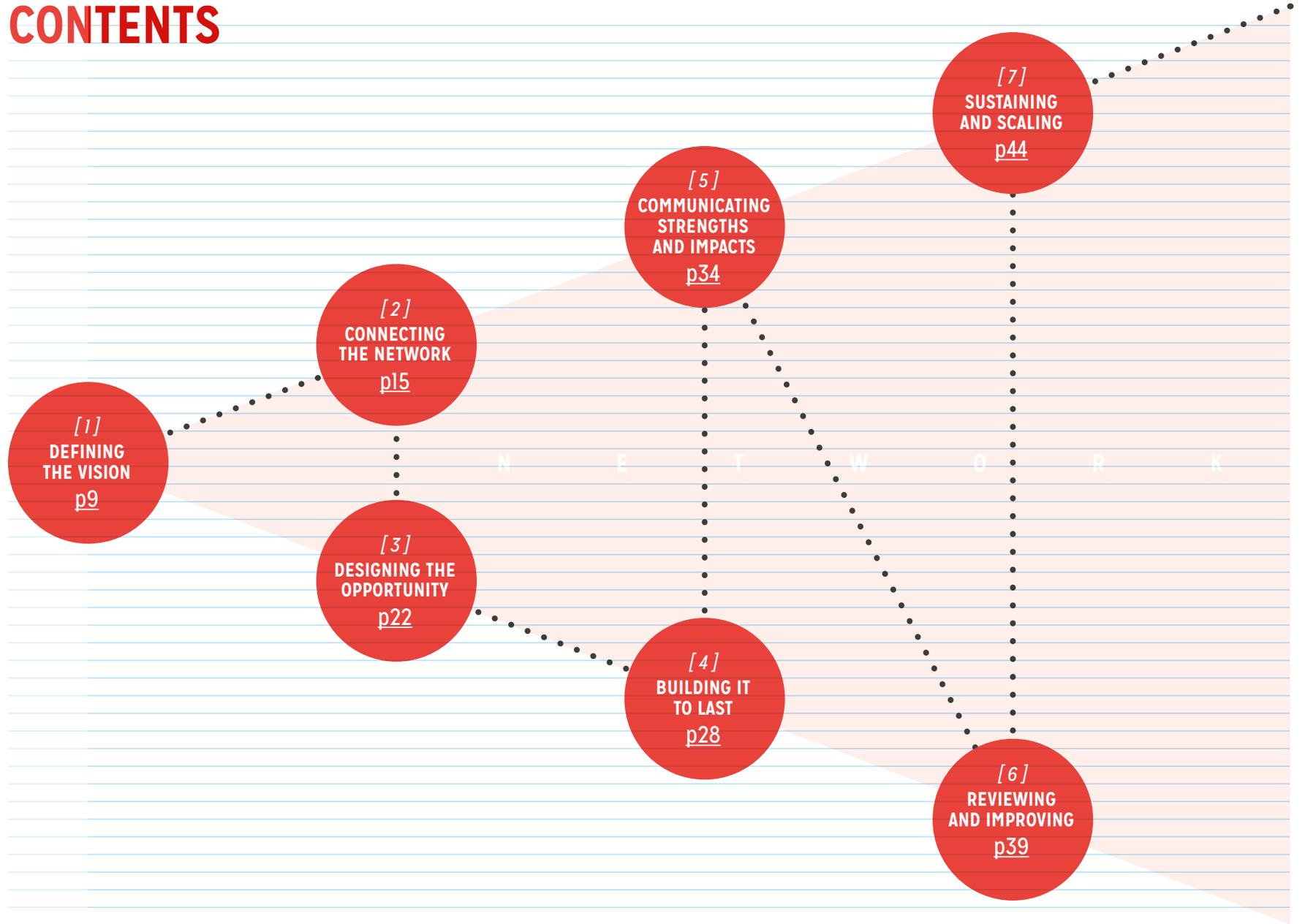
DEFINING THE VISION

OBJECTIVES:
TO CREATE A SOLID FOUNDATION AND STRUCTURE FOR HOW YOUR CREATIVE HUB WILL OPERATE.

You may already have a clear idea of the reasons why there is a need to develop a creative hub; perhaps it is to unite the creative community and entice new collaborations, to build new support mechanisms, or curate events and resources which could support a community of like-minded creatives. Or it might be a mixture of all of these factors.

In order to articulate the challenges and opportunities to others and encourage their support, it is important that you clarify a strong vision; check there is sufficient demand for the hub and understand your hub's unique potential attributes.

Identifying the gaps, needs and demand

Before embarking on establishing a hub, it is important that you ask yourself and potential creative hub members a number of questions to assess the gaps, needs and demand for a new hub provision.

Try answering the following questions in as much depth as possible. As you build the hub you will also have to develop a culture of collaboration, so try to involve others in developing responses to these points. Running this as a facilitated workshop, or informal forum event will give you the opportunity to speak directly to potential future hub members.

- What challenges currently face creatives locally? How would a physical/virtual hub support the community?

- Do certain creative sectors need improved or different types of support? Will it be beneficial to support only one sector, or would they benefit from engaging with broader creatives and/or other industries?

- Is there an established creative community already who will benefit from a new hub, or will the community have to be developed from scratch?

- Are there any other organisations providing similar hub provisions, and if so how will this hub add value? Are there opportunities to work in partnership to develop shared provision?

Focusing on the short and long term

Now that you have identified the creative goals your hub will address, you should focus on developing a succinct way of describing what the hub will do. The more you can explain your thinking, the easier it will be to get others onboard as supporters.

FIRSTLY WRITE DOWN WHAT THE HUB'S SHORT TERM GOALS ARE:

For example this could include: provide workspace for creatives, building a community of creatives, enabling the public to access a maker space.

NEXT WRITE DOWN WHAT THE HUB'S LONG TERM ASPIRATIONS ARE:

For example this could be talent retention/ attraction to the area, job creation, regenerating a specific area, solving social challenges, increasing cultural tourism. It will be valuable to read any strategic reports to see if there are opportunities to tie into local economic or social enterprise objectives.

Selecting the business model

Your business model and funding structure will depend on your purpose and objectives, your hub could be a for-profit company, a charity, a social venture, a community interest company (CIC) or a co-operative.

To select the most appropriate business model, you should consider what types of stakeholders might be interested in supporting your hub financially and what types of ways you will make revenue – such as studio rental, training services, membership fees, event delivery. See the section 'Designing the opportunity' for advice on what services your hub could offer, later in the HubKit.

Remember that your hub will evolve naturally because of the nature of what you do and your business model may change as a result. Mixed income hubs develop different channels of financing into the organisation, to increase sustainability, stability and decrease risk. This can be daunting but by keeping focused on the long term vision it will make it easier to achieve.

HUB INSIDER:

What is the vision?

The FuseBox is a studio and collaboration space in central Brighton, which provides space and assistance to start-ups from the creative, digital and tech sector. The venue has also hosted a range of events from workshops to hackathons.

Hub type:
Studio

Stage:
Beginning / Growing

Structure:
The Fusebox is powered by Wired Sussex, Ltd Company by Guarantee.

Finance:
A mix of public funding, private investment and earned income.

Staff:
1 hub coordinator (with up to 10 staff or freelancers project dependent).

fuseboxbtn.tumblr.com

The FuseBox is an open plan hub, designed to bring the practices of the arts, humanities and design together with lean start up models to support businesses. We already desperately want and need to expand despite initially worrying about how we would fill the space!

We spent a long time considering our common goals and shared vision, relating to where we are based – Brighton. We feel strongly that Hubs have to feel that they are of the place they are based; and that they create value for that location, beyond what goes on within the hub.

Understand why you are doing it and what the purpose of your Hub is; make sure you communicate this to everybody who is engaged with it. Don't be afraid to fail as long as you learn from your failings, not learning from failings is useless but not trying stuff is useless too. Have a big vision and take small steps.

Phil Jones, The FuseBox

ALT
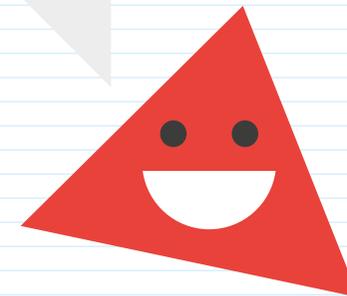
HUB INSIDER:

A sustainable future

Impact Hub Birmingham belongs to the global network of Impact Hubs; part innovation lab, part business incubator and part community centre, they offer members a unique ecosystem of resources, inspiration, and collaboration opportunities to grow impact. The team galvanised a community and crowdfunded the hub into existence.

Hub type:
Alternative

Stage:
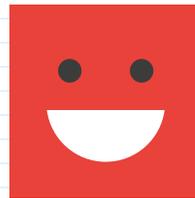Open / Growing

Structure:
Community Interest Company (CIC)

Finance:
Crowd funded, team investment and crowdfunder matched.

Staff:
3 full time staff members and 40 volunteers.

birmingham.impacthub.net

Impact Hub Birmingham is a space for people to come together who are working on projects and initiatives which are socially responsible, are largely purpose-driven and have positive social and/or environmental impacts.

The catalyst was around five or six years ago when we introduced TEDx to the city and it began surfacing lots of interesting people. As young people in the city that was quite exciting and we kept getting asked what's next, but our own capacity was low and there was no finance behind what we were doing.

However there were lots of bursts of serendipity, people were meeting and collaborations started happening. A group of us came together to explore how we could build something with a collaborative spirit, a safe space and a new way of working, being and doing.

We looked at models around the world for alternative ways to finance and operate a Hub, knowing that we were driven by creating social impact.

At the heart of the Hub is this new model of leadership, rather than the traditional heroic leadership style, it's much more distributed, as there are new ways of convening people.

We didn't talk to the community about the actual thing we wanted to do, but instead talked about the vision – the place where we wanted to end up – and how that would help contribute to people's lives in the everyday. Finding ways to be reciprocal in our genuine relationships with our community and volunteers was important.

Sticking to the genuine big vision and making sure that people knew we were in for the long run has got us to the stage of massively exceeding our crowdfunding target, which was unprecedented in the city. We all need to find new models of supporting people that face huge hurdles of starting ventures and move away from the dependency culture that we've created.

Through the Hub we're experimenting to find out how you create a sustainable business and make it citizen-led. It's not about being a space manager or a property landlord, we have to be fantastic curators of platforms and to benefit from this we need lots of us doing this.

Immy Kaur, Impact Hub Birmingham

IN SUMMARY

FOCUS ON THE NEEDS AND CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BY THE COMMUNITY
YOU WANT YOUR HUB TO SUPPORT AND GAIN THEIR BACKING.

DEVELOP A SHORT AND LONG TERM VISION AND MISSION FOR YOUR HUB THAT YOU
CAN USE TO INSPIRE OTHERS.

UNDERSTAND YOUR PURPOSE TO THEN SELECT THE MOST APPROPRIATE BUSINESS
MODEL, WHICH MIGHT ALSO CHANGE AS YOU EVOLVE AND DEVELOP.

CONNECTING THE NETWORK

OBJECTIVES:

TO BUILD UNDERSTANDING, TRUST AND SUPPORT THROUGH DEVELOPING LASTING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS.

To shape and strengthen your hub, so that it is nurtured and owned by the network, it is essential to build trust and connections with different types of influencers and supporters. These relationships are key to all stages of the hub's development; they will keep you on track, inspire new ideas and create opportunities for your network.

Nurturing the network

An empowered network creates a collective and cohesive voice, increases capacity and provokes innovation. Consider if your network has to be focused specifically by geography, sector or career stage; as some of the most productive hubs benefit from supporting a broad mix of disciplines, ages and backgrounds which spark cross sector innovation.

Where are you now?

Once you have identified the reason for establishing your hub and can communicate this, you should find that you start to build a small tribe of supporters who can help grow your reach. Whether you are starting from scratch or building on an existing hub, meaningful engagement with your network is essential. A great hub leader/manager intimately understands their community, their needs, their challenges and what kind of support will be most valuable to them.
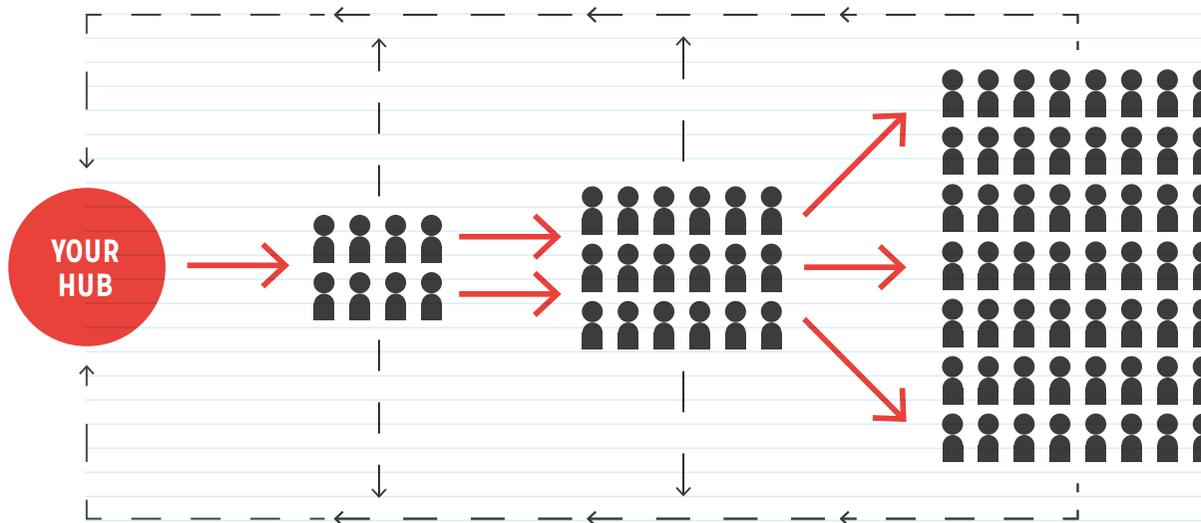
Getting out there

Meeting your community and starting the conversation is key – do this face to face and digitally. Remember that conversations are two-way exchanges; gather and share information and insights to strengthen your hub to build trust, reputation and confidence.

MEET-UPS

EVENTS

SHOWCASES

FOCUS GROUPS

SURVEYS

Finding your champions

Forming a hub steering group can be a powerful way to provide advocacy and support to the network and the hub. The group should include committed individuals who have a variety of different skill sets and backgrounds. They will act as a sounding board to focus on placing the needs of your network at the hub's core.

These champions and advocates for the sector can also bring and embed opportunities, sponsorship and resources back into the hub and enhance the energy that flows through a hub from start-up to growth. They can be the building blocks between industry and policy, so keep them close and informed.

Building Partnerships

Partnerships are hugely important and by working in collaboration with organisations, funders, local government and academia you will extend reach, avoid duplication of support and will pool shared resources. Partnerships enable shared risks and rewards, and the ability to engage with new audiences and garner support from other industries.
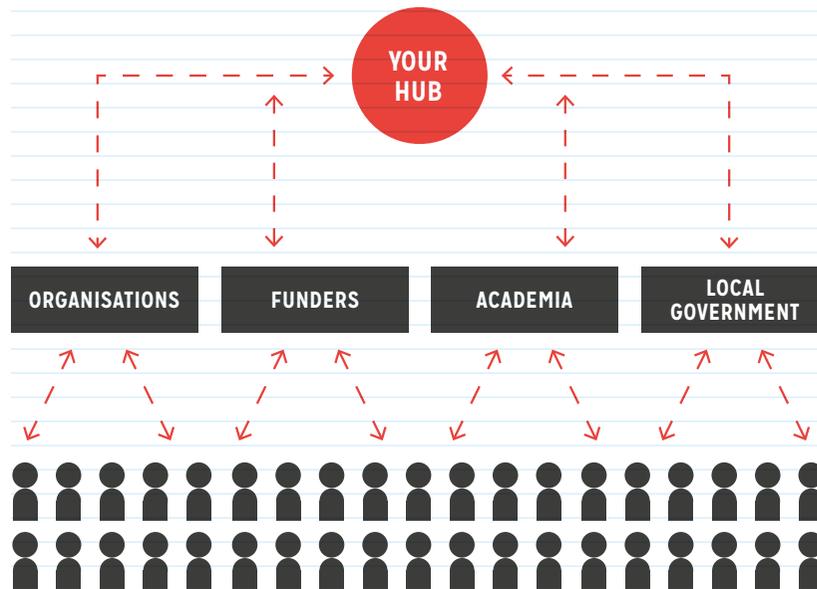
Think global, act local

In the interconnected world we now all live in, learning from and connecting with other hubs is vital to the success and impact of your hub. Developing links and collaborations will help to plug your network into a wider market of opportunities both in national and international settings. The benefits to your hub include knowledge exchange, peer support, talent development and access to finance.

There are many ways to develop useful connections such as: hub visits, digital interactions (i.e. group video chats, social media groups/forums), residencies and exchanges, case studies, industry events such as the European Creative Hubs Forum, run by the British Council.

HUB INSIDER:

Diversity is the key

The Watershed's Pervasive Media Studio in Bristol hosts a community of artists, creative companies, technologists and academics exploring experience design and creative technology.

Hub type:
Centre

Stage:
Established / Growing

Structure:
Watershed Arts Trust: Charity, iShed Community Interest Company (CIC), Watershed Trading: Ltd Company by Shares (wholly owned by Watershed Arts Trust).

Finance:
Public funding, private investment and earned income.

Staff:
They currently employ 136 people across Watershed, which includes full and part time staff.

watershed.co.uk/pmstudio

Watershed is a hub in Bristol, which includes a cinema, café bar, conference space and the pervasive media studio which is a co-location workspace for artists, technologists, academics, creatives and has been going for seven years.

Watershed's core values are around talent and supporting people with bright ideas to explore their own value and the value of those ideas in the world. Diversity is also important, working with people who are not like you make everyone's work better. We try to curate in difference and diversity.

We have structured systems in place for people applying to base their work in the studio and are evaluated on the mix. If we have too much of one discipline, we ask are we missing something else? Anyone can hot desk with us on Fridays to reinvigorate the community, which also helps us find new interesting people. We have open calls and funding schemes, but probably most important is our ability to respond opportunistically to talented people wherever we find them – often people who wouldn't get formalised funding or support from elsewhere.

Be generous and be curious, don't imagine that because something is not in your frame of reference it isn't applicable to you. Search out what other sectors are doing and learn from them and don't be bounded by your own rules and bureaucracy.

The people I work with keeps me inspired – the pleasure you get when you see audiences engaging with their work and knowing that the work wouldn't exist without the Watershed is just brilliant.

Clare Reddington, Watershed

HUB INSIDER:

Why create a hub?

Cardiff Start is a group of entrepreneurs, startup founders, creatives, students, and investors who believe that Cardiff is a brilliant place to work and live. They are passionate about sharing knowledge, advice and help.

Hub type:
Network

Stage:
Emerging / Growing

Structure:
Limited company, registered as a Community Interest Company (CIC).

Finance:
A mix of higher education, public funding and private investment.

Staff:
All voluntary – 1 part time hub manager, 5 on the Board.

cardiffstart.com

We created Cardiff Start because there wasn't much specific support for digital technology startups based in the area and we believe that Cardiff has the potential to become a world-class tech cluster, in Europe's fastest growing capital city.

A few of us initially got together to discuss ideas and after a handful of blog posts, a handful of beers, and a handful of meetups, we now have a large engaged network. Our events focus on developing connections between tech companies and also investors – if our members get something out of being engaged with the community, they'll put something back in, which in turn helps the whole network.'

Neil Cocker, Cardiff Start
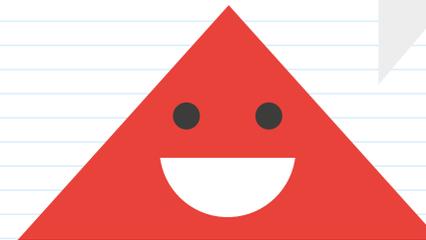
IN SUMMARY

MAKE IT A PRIORITY TO TRULY UNDERSTAND THE NEEDS AND JOURNEY OF YOUR COMMUNITY.

GET CHAMPIONS ON-BOARD EARLY TO ACT AS A POWERFUL WAY OF AMPLIFYING YOUR HUB'S VOICE.

DEVELOP COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS AND PLUG YOUR NETWORK INTO LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES.

DESIGNING THE OPPORTUNITY

OBJECTIVES:

TO DEVELOP THE SERVICES YOUR HUB WILL PROVIDE FOR YOUR COMMUNITY, BASED ON YOUR RESOURCES AND CAPACITY.

Designing the activities, services, products and experiences, that your hub will offer, will further assist you to clarify and articulate exactly what your hub does. Activities should be clearly aligned to your vision — therefore every opportunity should be designed in close collaboration with your network in order to fulfil the needs of your community.

Designing with and for the community

The services you offer will depend on what type of hub you are developing. If your members spend a large amount of time in your hub i.e. a collective studio space, then you should consider the ecosystem you are creating – the types of businesses, the mix of disciplines and even the individual personalities can be key. Creating the best possible culture and working environment through careful curation is crucial, as when the mix of tenants is imbalanced it can be detrimental to all hub members – you need to select the ingredients carefully for it to succeed.

Hubs work well when all contributors have an equal stake in their development, so do this in partnership with others – creatives, potential partners, city officials – to enable you to develop the collective offer.

Establish terms and conditions with your network, to ensure everyone understands what is expected of them and what they can expect from the hub.

Offer a programme of regular events to make sure that your community keeps connected and this can act as a mechanism to introduce new potential members to your hub through word of mouth recommendations.

Remember that people who leave your hub will remain alumni forever; therefore maintaining relationships with previous network members in a light-touch way can give you a way of researching and gaining feedback on new ideas and can encourage them to share your upcoming activities with their extended networks.

The hub manager role:

The role is diverse and requires a range of different skills and fluencies, these may include:

DAY TO DAY OPERATIONAL SKILLS:

Project management

Event management

Financial management

Network management

Sales, marketing, digital

Administration

STRATEGIC SKILLS:

Partnership working

Leadership and staff development

Business planning

Public speaking

Networking

IMPORTANT PERSONAL QUALITIES:

Openness and approachable

Integrity

Resilience

Ambitious

Ability to instil trust and build a movement.

HUB MANAGERS ARE RESPONSIBLE TO:

Community

Funders

Stakeholders

Board members

Steering group

WHO ARE THEY RESPONSIBLE FOR:

The community/members they represent

The sector(s) they represent

The place they represent locally, nationally and internationally

Hub manager employment terms:

Hub Managers can be either employed on a fixed term employment contract, or on a freelance basis.

Innovation over duplication

Although being radical in your approach is to be encouraged, try not to duplicate existing services already offered by other organisations, as this could create unnecessary strains in local relationships. Join forces if appropriate – to signpost, share resources and even help each other learn, innovate or re-design activities, to create mutual benefits for everyone.

To help you think through and map out the resources you have; and identify what benefits the hub will create, try completing the below activity:

- **What is needed to make the hub a reality?**
  e.g. types of resources, finance, equipment, staff.

- **What skills and capabilities do you already have?**
  e.g. business skills, event management.

- **What activities / services / products will the hub provide?**
  e.g. studio rental, events, business support.

- **What benefits will the hub create for those involved?**
  e.g. for tenants, collaborators, suppliers.

- **What broader impacts could the hub potentially generate?**
  e.g. for city, stakeholders, creative/cultural economy.
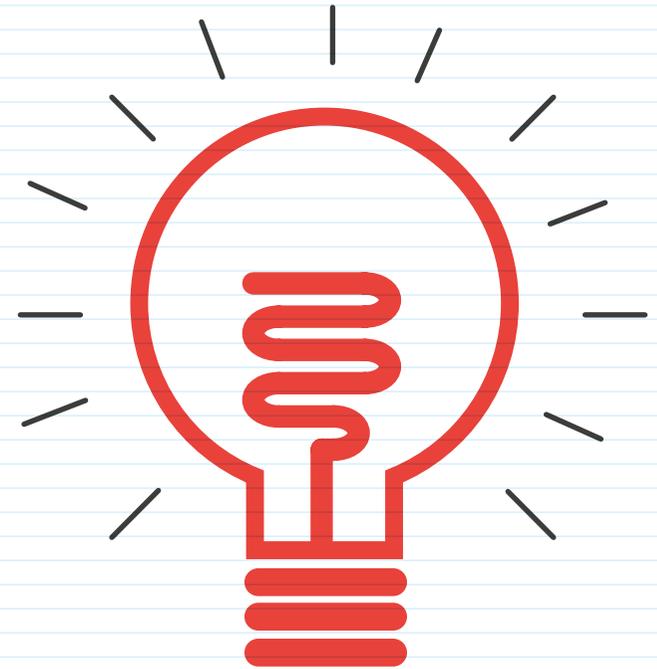
HUB INSIDER:

Setting the ethos

Residence is a collective of artists based in Bristol, who share space, resources, knowledge and opportunities. They make live performance, including live art, script based work, devised performance, community and interactive work, and are united by a curiosity towards each other's practices, and a commitment to supporting each other.

Hub type:
Studio

Stage:
Established / Growing

Structure:
Community Interest Company (CIC)

Finance:
Earned income

Staff:
Residence is a collective with no staff, they rotate a leader every three months and someone responsible for finance, all voluntary.

residence.org.uk

We're an artist led hub, a collective of about 20-30 makers, live art and performance makers. We share office space, a library, technical equipment, rehearsal spaces and kitchen.

A core value for Residence is mutual support and respect, everyone is there to work, support each other and share. We're horizontal in structure so we have a rule, which is that whoever says, does. Meaning if you propose something it becomes your responsibility to do it. Residence has a homelike feel and I feel quite at home when I'm there.

If you are in a similar situation, you're looking for zero funding ground-up approaches to building your own space. I'd say the essential things we've learnt are that your space has to be warm enough so it can be used in the winter, you have to have an internet connection and you have to be able to make tea. It's about being really imaginative about the possibilities – when you walk into an empty room and think, the rehearsals could take place here, and the events and gigs over there. It's about having that positive imagination – that's what really counts.

Ed Rapley, Residence

IN SUMMARY

CREATE THE RIGHT COLLABORATIVE CONDITIONS FOR YOUR COMMUNITY.

BUILD ON THE SKILLS, RESOURCES AND TALENTS YOU HAVE ACCESS TO.

GOOD HUB MANAGERS REQUIRE A DIVERSE RANGE OF SKILLS AND FLUENCIES.

BUILDING IT TO LAST

OBJECTIVES: FOCUS ON THE FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY OF YOUR HUB FROM THE OUTSET.

One of the most challenging things to do when setting up a hub is to work out the costs involved; this can be made more complex if you are establishing a new type of hub model. To ensure your hub is sustainable in the long term, it's crucial to consider these factors as early as possible.

Planning the finances

We use financial modelling tools all the time to work out the best rates for our personal finances by comparing rates online to find the best and most appropriate options. Modelling finances for your hub is no different – enabling you to weigh up different scenarios and approaches to your potential income sources and expenditure before committing. You can find cashflow spreadsheets online to experiment with inputting different financial options before deciding on the most appropriate direction.

If you are setting up a physical hub, you will need to know the rental and running costs – this will help you plan what services and crucially what income you need to bring in.

Costing your services

It is important to research what people will be willing to pay by asking your prospective network what services they need and how much they would spend. Questionnaires and surveys are just one way of doing this; more effective ways include facilitating workshops or speaking at events to create more engaging ways for people to feed in their perspectives.

To cost the services that you will offer, look at what other similar hubs offer and what they cost and then benchmark these against your own – don't just look locally, also look internationally. Research other types of hubs outside of your sector – where you could potentially translate learning from their model to apply to your own.

Diversifying your income streams will ensure that the hub is not reliant on just one funding source, however make sure you are focused enough on the activities which will help you reach your overall vision, with a view to become self-sustaining for long term success.

Securing external support

Getting external partners on board with your hub early can be critical to support with sponsorship, in-kind resources, grants, investment, loans and match-funds. Make sure that you can clearly articulate your vision and how you will achieve it, as you may only get one chance to pitch your idea. Being able to tell a good story backed up by facts and figures will help; there are lots of guides online to help you improve your presentation and storytelling skills.

New models of finance, such as crowdfunding and impact investment can be valuable forms of raising capital for your hub. There are many inspiring stories of how people have successfully achieved this online and within the HubKit — building a community at the centre of the idea is key.

86% CROWDFUNDED

4 DAYS TO GO
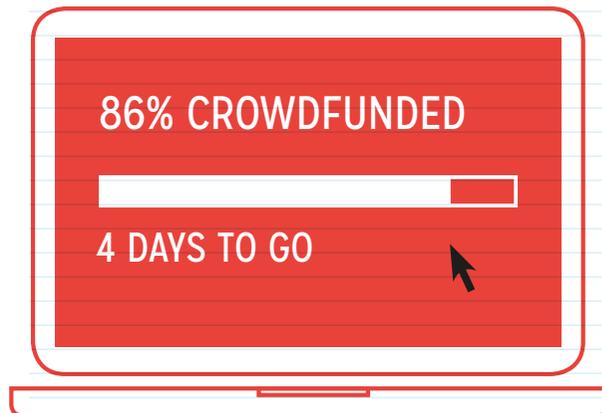
HUB INSIDER:

Fostering collaboration and innovation

Factoría Cultural is a creative incubator and hub in Madrid which promotes the development of entrepreneurial initiatives in the various fields of technology, communication and the arts, all included in the Creative and Cultural Industries.

Hub type:
Centre

Stage:
Emerging / Growing

Structure:
Non-profit association

Finance:
Private/public funding

Staff:
8 members of staff

factoriaculturalmadrid.es

We work in partnership with many public and private organisations, they are essential to our sustainability because most of them offer residency grants for creative entrepreneurship projects and provide advice and other services to our residents.

Fostering innovation requires a long list of ingredients. First, uncovering opportunities through research and untapped opportunities. Interdisciplinary teams analyse research data and, in turn, these are the building blocks to develop opportunities and solutions, which later become businesses.

We foster sustainable businesses by providing a creative space, technical infrastructure, support, idea exchange, training, investor relations and an array of mentoring and tutoring to ensure entrepreneurs are ready to tackle the world of business competition. Most startups fail because they are unable to scale or adapt to changing circumstances and conditions. Combining scale and agility are key factors in the establishment of a business.

Our programme is based on a Learn By Doing philosophy. We focus our support on providing mentors during the early stages of the project and a team of advisors is available to provide advice specific to each project throughout their time at Factoría.

It is important to have a good look round before you do anything else – learn from others' experience and do your market research. Find support from both public and private agencies to facilitate networking for your residents. Good technical facilities are convenient and location is important. Decide on what focus to give the hub. Think in terms of what you as a facilitator are ready to do for your residents. Give your hub "personality" and strive to be service oriented in the areas that are most needed. Periodic surveys and chats over coffee help you understand your residents, their needs and requirements.

Rosina Gómez-Baeza, Factoría Cultural
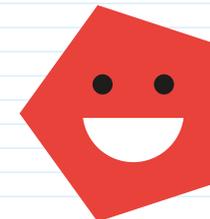
HUB INSIDER:

At the centre of long term change

Baltic Creative provides creative space to meet the varied needs of the creative and digital sector in Liverpool and plays a major part in the regeneration of the Baltic Triangle area.

Hub type:
Centre / Cluster

Stage:
Established / Ambitions to grow

Structure:
Community Interest Company (CIC)

Finance:
European funding, public funding and earned income.

Staff:
2 full time employees, 1 intern and 9 voluntary board members.

baltic-creative.com

Baltic Creative own and manage 45,000sq/ft. of refurbished industrial warehouses in Liverpool, with around 250-300 people working out of a variety of different sized studios and co-working spaces. There's a really broad mix of freelancers, startups, SME's and entrepreneurs from across the creative and digital sectors. It's all about maintaining a good mixture of businesses and creating a community. That's what makes Baltic so exciting; the people and the community.

There are lots of traditional businesses in the Baltic Triangle area who have been here for a long time and they now coexist with the newer creative businesses. People can see it's an exciting area to work and there are a lot of people who want to get involved in what is happening and be part of it.

Apart from studio rental, we run events and business support workshops; we also run regular tenant meetings, called the 'Baltic Jam'. At the Jam businesses get the chance to give a presentation and share what they do to engage more with their fellow residents.

Having lots of communal and breakout spaces, a meeting space and a fantastic café has really helped us too. The tenant areas have wide walkways and communal kitchens – it's all about creating the right environment to get people communicating and encourage collaboration, without it being forced upon them.

It's worth taking the time to find a really good mixture of board members to help guide the strategic vision for your hub. Our board is made up of experienced people with expertise in a variety of sectors from the Arts, Tech, Business & Education worlds to Property, Regeneration and Finance. Find people that can open some of those doors for your Hub and get them involved to champion what you are doing.

Lyn Robertson & Chris Green, Baltic Creative
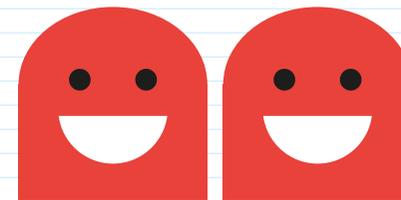
IN SUMMARY

EXPERIMENT WITH MODELLING THE HUB'S FINANCE IN DIFFERENT WAYS USING ONLINE CASHFLOW SPREADSHEET TEMPLATES.

BENCHMARK THE OFFER AND COST OF YOUR PROPOSED SERVICES AGAINST OTHERS WITHIN/OUTSIDE OF YOUR PARTICULAR SECTOR.

BUILD A SOLID CASE BACKED WITH QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE DATA TO ARTICULATE THE HUB'S FINANCIAL STATUS TO POTENTIAL FUNDERS, INVESTORS AND PARTNERS.

COMMUNICATING STRENGTHS AND IMPACTS

OBJECTIVES: TO BUILD A SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY AND COMMUNICATE THE VALUE OF YOUR HUB.

To grow a genuine network who care about the hub, it is essential to develop your hub's vision, values and voice, through authentic, consistent and open communication, across multiple channels.

Connecting your purpose

People want to connect with others who share common values and passions. Create an inclusive hub, where members feel motivated to contribute and empowered to share their stories with you. Your expertise and leadership should run through your messaging; so to build this answer the following questions to then complete the wheel of qualities.

Things to consider:

— What are the core values?
— What do you stand for?
— What do you care about?

— What is the vision?
— What is the hub's guiding insight?

— What is the mission?
— How does the hub act on its insight?

— What is the tone of voice?
— How do you speak to your network, partners and funders?

ICONS

PROPOSITION

BENEFITS

PRODUCT

HUB ESSENCE

HOW IT MAKES US LOOK

PERSONALITY

BENEFITS

VALUES
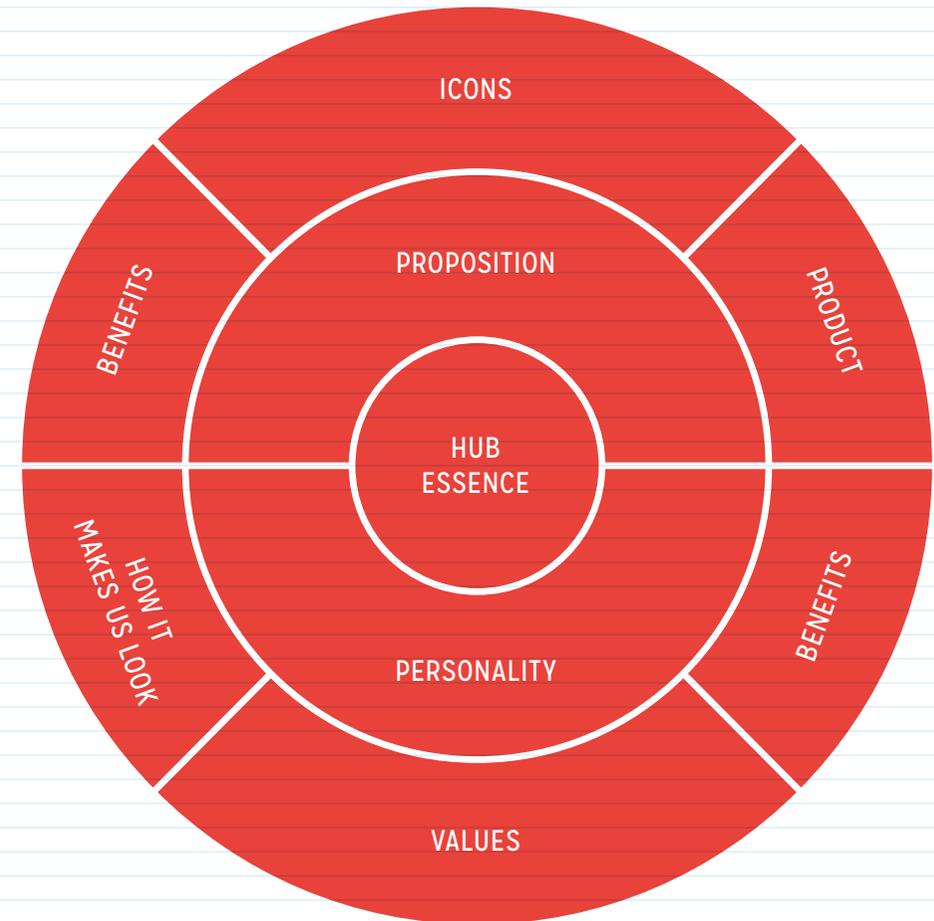
Building a digital community

Consider all the places you'd like to speak with your network. Where do you want to share news, highlight stories and present information? Successful hubs use social media and digital platforms to their advantage, understanding the power of direct conversations around the clock with their audiences, members and collaborators.

Playing with communication tools

Try new tools out with your network; experiment and don't be afraid to try things out, be creative. Create simple easy to follow house style guides for your hub brand, marketing and press activities, so that as you grow every member of the hub team can keep communication consistent and effective.

Communicating the impact beyond

Communicate the social, cultural and economic impacts that your hub generates for the city and any partners, such as Universities, local municipalities, corporates, charities and EU funders. This is increasingly important in a cash strapped world – look at your partner's strategic objectives to match priorities and find common ground and language which will assist you to explain what impact the partnership is achieving for all involved. See the next section for more ideas on what type of evidence to collect and share.

HUB INSIDER:

Building a creative force

FabLab Lisboa was created within the strategy of Lisbon's Municipality for the development of the local economy. FabLab Lisboa is the place to develop and prototype ideas and access innovation tools and workshops.

Hub type:
Centre

Stage:
Early – 1.5 years

Structure:
Municipality run

Staff:
5 full time, 1 intern and 2 volunteers.

fablablisboa.pt

Over the last year and a half, FabLab Lisboa has supported over 300 projects and has more than 1,000 members who use our prototyping and production equipment and services.

Creating access to these innovative tools enables many benefits – by bridging the gap between idea and realisation, it provides a different kind of learning by doing – the experimentation and prototyping allows people to quickly test their market and gain feedback.

We foster collaboration at FabLab Lisboa by offering two open days a week free of charge, to develop and build the community; and we work in partnership with Municipality as our host, material suppliers, other Hubs, the Universities and Art Schools. We are also developing open calls targeting the creative community of the city and we aim to unite the scattered community of makers and DIY creatives into a single force towards a common goal of local development and collaboration.

My top tips for setting up a new hub would be to analyse the geographical and socio-economic context of where you are setting it up. These factors will play a big role in the character of the hub. Implementation should come in phases – growth should be progressive, start small and modestly.

Finally, be open to every single invitation, at least in your first year as you might find interesting surprises.

Bernardo Gaeiras – FabLab Lisboa
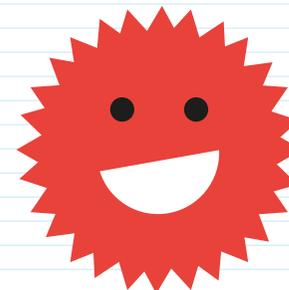
IN SUMMARY

FIND COMMON GROUND WITH OTHERS BY CONNECTING IN YOUR VALUES AND PURPOSE.

EXPERIMENT WITH NEW TOOLS AND COMMUNICATION METHODS.

COMMUNICATE YOUR BROADER IMPACTS TO DEVELOP STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIPS AND INFLUENCE POLICY.

REVIEWING AND IMPROVING

OBJECTIVES:

DEMONSTRATE THE VALUE OF YOUR HUB FOR THE SECTOR AND ECONOMY.

Capturing information about how your hub is doing and sharing it is crucial to show your community, stakeholders and potential funders what your hub has achieved. Think beyond statistical data, rich stories bring colour to your achievements and can be even more powerful than numbers alone. Aim to collect and share both quantitative and qualitative data with your community and be ready to provide this whenever needed by funders, partners or champions.

Tracking the benefits

It can be difficult to track the impacts of what you've helped catalyse in a community; connections can be loose and your network may not fully understand why the hub needs to capture this information. Keep in touch regularly with everyone and make it as easy as possible for people to pass on their stories – you never know when you might need these insights.

Data you could collect to evidence the impact of your hub could include: measuring the number of people who have engaged with the hub; the benefits they have gained – such as new work contracts, or social impacts for the community; the numbers of events and activities you have organised; photos of networking sessions; stories from your social media engagement; and case studies detailing individuals/businesses.

Events can be valuable to collect feedback in fun, interesting and low cost ways – helping you capture the softer impacts, which can't be recorded by any precise measurement.

It is valuable to build in regular blocks of time for the core team to work on reviewing, planning and strategy development – this will keep you on the front foot and also make sure your team and community are connected into the bigger strategic picture.
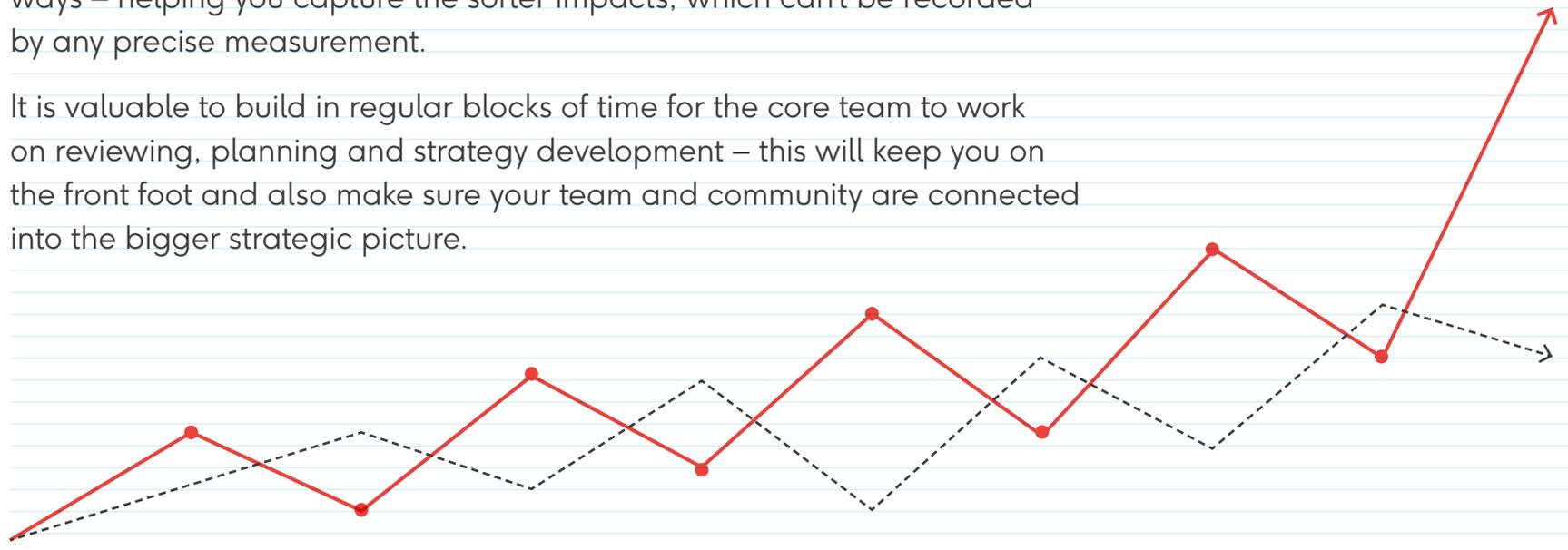
Consent and feedback

Use your database of contacts to help gather information, but always consider privacy and consent. Be transparent about what you are doing and make sure you have individual's consent to use their data/photos/stories before publishing in any domain.

It's unlikely that feedback about the hub will always be 100% positive, so it is important that you don't take this personally. Putting your heart and soul into developing the hub means that irrespective of whether the feedback is constructive or overly harsh, it can be difficult to hear. However it's critical to continually ask yourself and your network how you can make the hub better to thrive in the long term, so keep asking, listening and responding to feedback.

Spillover effects

Consider the broader impacts that the hub generates for your local town/city and also any national or international agendas it is helping achieve. Hubs often create value beyond just benefiting their own network and this isn't always captured. These spillover effects can help make the area more attractive to live, work and visit; so make sure that you demonstrate how you are achieving this to help secure support and resources in future.

The Connected City

One of the ways hubs can achieve sustainability and manageable growth is through building links and networks with other creative hubs and also non-creative incubators.

Lisbon Creative City is a new initiative being spearheaded by Lisbon City Council. The City recognises the importance of Creative Hubs for the sustainability and growth of the creative industries. The City has a hands-on approach to supporting and managing some of the city's hubs, but has also instigated the Lisbon Incubator Network – supporting the city's hubs hubs to grow and develop best practice.

The Lisbon Incubator network allows the city's creative hubs to learn more about business models more commonly found in tech incubators or other sectors. Thus, the business incubator model of an organisation like StartUp Lisboa, or the Venture Capital and Angel Investment expertise of an organisation like Beta-i, can influence and support a Creative Hub like Mouraria Creative Hub. The network is built on a commitment to organisational openness, and partnerships between incubators and hubs are becoming increasingly common.

HUB INSIDER:

Learning from collaborators

Hackney WickED promotes local culture across the Hackney Wick and Fish Island areas of London; it is dedicated to providing a platform for artists to showcase their work through art events and an annual art festival.

Hub type:
Cluster

Stage:
Established but undergoing organisational development for a sustainable future.

Structure:
Community Interest Company (CIC)

Finance:
Mix of public and private funding.

Staff:
1 CEO, 5 Board Directors, 1–50 volunteers.

hackneywicked.co.uk

Hackney WickED is an annual festival and collective of artists based in Hackney Wick, it brings together a collective voice for artists to champion them and build creative collaborations, all year round. We started up in 2008 with a group of artists opening their studios and galleries; and became a Community Interest Company (CIC) in 2010. Our board of directors has a real mix of skills, across art curation, music programming and administration; we're all really open to sharing skills.

The artists and the local businesses in the area are our key partners; and the most telling sign of our success was when the Festival couldn't run one year due to the Olympics. Everyone told us that trade was bad and footfall was really low; and that the Hackney WickED weekend was the largest revenue generator for all of them. That was really cool for us to learn how much the organisation generates for them and brings in new audiences to the area – we're now using this learning to build our future plans and consider our income streams and opportunities.

Anna Maloney – Hackney WickED
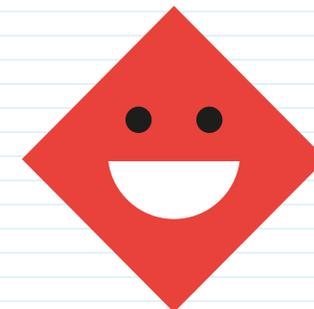
IN SUMMARY

USE A RANGE OF METHODS TO CAPTURE AND SHARE DATA ABOUT YOUR HUB IN CREATIVE WAYS AND INCLUDE BOTH QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE INFORMATION.

BUILD IN TIME OUT TO REVIEW AND ASSESS YOUR PROGRESS AND FOCUS ON THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE HUB.

FOCUS ON WHAT YOUR HUB DOES FOR THE PLACE IT'S BASED, BEYOND THE WALLS OF THE HUB.

SUSTAINING AND SCALING

OBJECTIVES:
TO FIND THE BEST MODEL OF SUSTAINABLE GROWTH FOR YOUR HUB.

If you have successfully developed a hub which has been capable of meeting the needs of its community and have sufficient demand for new space and/or services, then the chances are you will be considering growth.

Growing the hub

Hubs have the potential to grow and scale in different ways – some hubs may look for bigger premises; or create a members-only digital tool; or they might look for VC funding to grow themselves and the businesses they support.

Remember that as you grow, the role of the hub is not to be everything to everyone – some people in your network may want specific resources and equipment within the hub. If these exist in an accessible location elsewhere then partnerships can be developed to maximise resources, which should be in everyone's interest to jointly develop and grow services together.

Policy landscape fit

Fitting the hub's activity with local and national policies will become more important as you articulate the rationale for scaling the hub. Use business modelling, benchmarking and diagnostic tools to develop the business case and show how the hub meets geographic priorities (such as place-based development policies); and sector specific objectives (including economic, social and cultural priorities).

Leadership is key

Growth can put additional pressures on the staff team as the hub increases in size and becomes more established within the area and with the community. To become resilient and sustainable, innovative financial models need to be explored and this needs to be led by the right people with the right attitude to achieve this.

Finding opportunities to bring staff along on the journey with you and enable them to develop leadership skills can prove valuable for succession planning and for having a contingency plan in place. Consider taking on an intern/junior staff member, or develop a partnership with a local organisation who has a suitable member of staff who could be developed into a hub manager, or consider supporting a hub network member who has the people-centred attributes of hub managers.

Financial models

In the current economic climate creative hub managers are increasingly looking towards diversifying income streams in order to build a sustainable hub. Many are exploring private, venture capital and angel investment options.

Venture Capital:
An investor either provides capital to startup ventures or supports small companies that wish to expand. Venture capitalists invest in companies because they can earn a return on their investment by owning equity in the company.

Angel Investment:
An investor, group or network that provides one-time seed funding or ongoing financial backing for startups or entrepreneurs.

Keep future focused

Stay connected to the people at the heart of your hub – your community – if they understand and share your vision then they will have the best insights into guiding the future direction of the hub.
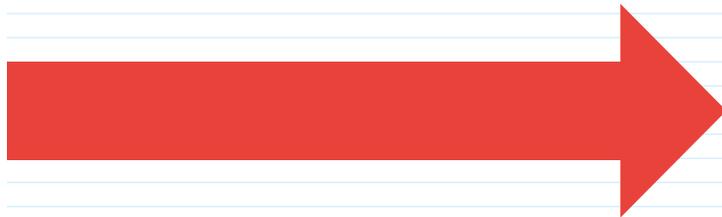
HUB INSIDER:

Stacking the finances

CodeBase is the UK's largest tech incubator and is based in Edinburgh. They are based entirely on private equity and are home to some of the best technology companies in Europe.

Hub type:
Cluster

Stage:
Established / growing

Structure:
Ltd Company

Finance:
Private investment and earned income.

Staff:
1 Managing Director and 5 employees.

thisiscodebase.com

I have spent several years building relationships within the international venture capital and private equity worlds. I understand which companies these investors will be interested in and I use that to help leverage money and talent. I am very protective of those investors and only pass them on companies or individuals who I rate highly. In terms of the incubator, the value for a larger corporate partner is in access to innovation (effectively they are looking to outsource R&D to startups). There is sometimes an element of Corporate Social Responsibility but I'm more keen on straight business advantage for both sides.

Keeping a balance of a competitive and healthy tenant ecosystem – both are completely interrelated for me. I think it works best when there is a level of healthy competition similar to as seen when friends do sporting activities together. They want to see the others do well, but they want to be a little bit better themselves.

The top tip really is: being honest is better for everyone in the long run. Those who can be helped to pivot will always outlast those who will not change their ideas.

Jamie Coleman, CodeBase

IN SUMMARY

HUBS CAN SCALE IN DIFFERENT WAYS AND LOCAL/NATIONAL/SECTORAL PRIORITIES
WILL BE KEY TO THIS GROWTH.

INVESTMENT CAN PLAY A HUGE ROLE IN SCALING YOUR HUB AND THE COMMUNITY
YOU SUPPORT.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP SKILLS ARE CRITICAL TO SUSTAINABILITY AND
SUCCESSION PLANNING.

We hope that by working through the HubKit you have gained insights into the different hub types, structures and functions; and that you have a clear understanding of hub roles, the impacts they can create and the aspects needed to ensure a long term future.

There are lots of other great resources available that complement this short creative hub guide, these have been listed in the following section...

Recommended resources

European Creative Hubs Forum can be found at:
creativehubs.org

British Council Hubs Case Studies
- Bethnel Green Ventures: goo.gl/Edo3bd
- Fabrica: goo.gl/ZwtXez
- Institute of Making: goo.gl/GeZ17M
- Repair Café: goo.gl/lkmThZ
- Watershed: goo.gl/gwd07S

Business Model Generation Canvas: goo.gl/R6pQhB

Collective Futures – project considering the structure and future role of creative collectives: goo.gl/IJiEuu

Creative England has a range of practical resources available online. Access to intelligence on key emerging business issues via a range of **expert videos** (goo.gl/4PfAEi) and **productivity guides:**
- Incubation and co-working best practice papers: goo.gl/dWlkcL
- Mentoring Programme / Open Data Workshop Models: goo.gl/xOMz23
- Creative Accelerator business diagnostic tool: goo.gl/pOYBcn
- Creative Finance Network: goo.gl/9r6uzK
- Better Business Finance: goo.gl/p0JepG

Creative England's Creative Cluster guides: goo.gl/v9s7Gu

Nesta DIY toolkit: goo.gl/3PS99a

Nesta's Startup Accelerator Guide: goo.gl/OZDXAF

Searching for Necessity – a report on civic, cultural and social innovation spaces: goo.gl/nxrZWG

Studio Tilt – project considering the role of physical space on creativity: goo.gl/ZBAWcX

The Contribution of the Art and Culture to the National Economy: goo.gl/60kqIL

Acknowledgements